

EFFECT OF WEATHER ON CROPS AND FARMING OPERATIONS, FEBRUARY, 1929

By J. B. KINCER

General summary.—The extremely low temperatures that persisted over much of the country during the first decade made a generally unfavorable period for outside operations. Little farm work was accomplished in central and western sections and highway traffic was difficult in many places. The extensive snow cover made feeding necessary and widespread reports were received of suffering among livestock with considerable shrinkage. Heavy firing of citrus groves was necessary in California and tender vegetation suffered some injury in the west Gulf area. Low temperatures in other Gulf sections retarded growth and frequent rains prevented much field work, with spring preparations backward in many places.

While there was some improvement in the weather during the second decade in some of the western grazing areas, conditions continued generally unfavorable for livestock in most places, with persistent cold and much range land snow covered. The coldest weather of the season was experienced in some parts of the northern Great Plains. At the close of the period a light snow cover had been deposited over much of the winter wheat area, but in Central Northern States snowfall was mostly light, although sufficient in places to impede highway traffic. Cool, cloudy, wet weather delayed field operations in the South and retarded growth of winter crops, with spring preparations much behind the average season in many localities. In much of Florida and western Texas the weather was more favorable, while late reports indicated frost damage to crops in California.

During the last decade the weather, in general, remained unfavorable for seasonal farm operations, with unusually cold weather reported in the interior. Late in the period milder weather prevailed, with the snow cover largely removed from the Ohio Valley, but there was a deposit of heavy, wet snow over the upper Mississippi Valley and the western Lake region. The snow disappeared rapidly in the Middle Atlantic area, under the influence of warmer weather, but outside work was still delayed. Rains were again frequent in the South, with the soil too wet for plowing and other spring operations. Low temperatures favorably retarded fruit buds in the west Gulf area, but the mild weather in the Southeast caused considerable development, with some peaches beginning to open in the Fort Valley district of Georgia by the close of the month.

Small grains.—During the first decade the winter wheat belt experienced rather low temperatures, but they were preceded in the southwest by generous snows and the main area had a fairly good blanket. Although much ice remained in northern Illinois and Indiana and in much of Missouri, wheat was well protected generally. In the more northwestern States and Rocky Mountain sections winter wheat fields were amply covered, but the ground was bare in the Atlantic coast area.

During the second decade a brief mild period caused some improvement in the ice conditions, and much snow was also removed in the central and southern portions of the belt. Low temperatures again overspread the region, but there was an additional light layer of snow in many sections. While fields were generally bare in Kansas, with plants frozen to the ground, there was apparently no serious or widespread harm; some heaving was reported in Kentucky. In the more northwestern States fields were still well covered; in the South winter cereals made slow growth.

During the last decade a severe cold wave overspread the central wheat belt, but fields were generally well protected by an ample snow cover. A reaction to milder later in the period cleared the snow from much of the wheat area, and toward the close of the month the ground was mostly bare east of the Mississippi River; at the same time there was a heavy fall in upper Mississippi Valley districts. The snow largely melted in Nebraska, but western Kansas was covered with from 1 to 5 inches. Wheat made but little growth in the Southwest, while in the far Northwest there was considerable melting of snow with many sections bare.

Miscellaneous crops.—Pastures remained in generally poor or dormant condition in southern sections during most of the month, except for some improvement toward the close. An ample snow covering prevailed in central-northern districts during the severe weather, but there were local complaints of unfavorable freezing and thawing in the Ohio Valley during the second decade. Heavy feeding was necessary in the northern Great Plains most of the month, with local livestock deterioration, but toward the close there was some moderation of the wintry conditions. There were continued reports from Wyoming of small losses or shrinkage and the range remained generally closed; this month made the third one of severe wintry weather and conditions were critical in some western parts of the State, with feed scarce in some parts. The last decade brought more seasonable weather to the central Rocky Mountain region and the Southwest, where considerable suffering among livestock was reported early in the month. Cold weather was rather detrimental to young lambs in Pacific Coast States. Feed was generally ample during the month in most sections, but toward the close it had become short in many localities, especially in Idaho and parts of Wyoming.

Except for some delay by cold weather, southern truck crops made satisfactory advance during the month and some potatoes were planted toward the close in the Southeast. Tobacco in beds was in good condition in the South and some work had been done in preparation of seed beds in northern sections. There was some injury to peach buds by the cold weather of the month, especially in Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri, but deciduous fruits were generally in satisfactory condition. Citrus fruits did well but there was some injury by frost to oranges and lemons in California during the second decade.